



THE WATERMENS SVIT, *Concerning Players.*



He occasions that hath moued me to write this pamphlet are many, and forcible, and the Attempt in writing it aduenturous and full of danger, for as on the one side I doubt not but with truth to stoppe the mouthes of Ignorance and Mallice that haue and doe daily scandalize mee, / and withall I know I shall purchase a generall thankes , from all honest men of my Company) so I am assured to gaine the hatred of some that loue me wel, and I affee & them no worse, onely for my playne truth and discharging my conscience; But fall back, fall edge, come what can come I am resolued and without feare or flattery thus I begin.

In the month of January last 1613. there was a motion made by some so the better sort of the company of Watermen, that it were necessary for the releefe of such a decayed multitude to petition to his Maiesy , that the Players might not haue a play-house in London or in Midlesex, within foure miles of the city on that side of the Thames. Now this request may seeme harsh and not well to be digested by the Players and their Apendixes, but the reasons that mou'd vs vnto it being charitably considered , makes the suite not onely seeme

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reasonable, but past seeming most necessary to be sued for, and tollerable to be granted.

Our petition being written to purpose aforesaid, I was selected by my company to deliuere it to his Maiesy and follow the busynesse, which I did with that care and integrity, that I am assured none can iustly taxe mee with the contrary. I did ride twise to Theobalds, once to Newmarket, and twice to Roystone, before I could get a reference vpon my peticion, I had to beare my charge, of my company first and last, seauen pound two shillings, which horsshire horsemeat and mans meat brought to a consumpcion, besides I wroate feuerall pettions to most of the right honorable Lords of his Maiesies Priuy Counsell, and I found them all compassionately affected to the nescessity of our cause.

First I did briefly declare part of the seruices that Watermen had done in Queene Elizabeths raigne, of famous memory, in the voyage to Portingale, with the Right Honorable and never to be forgotten Earle of Essex, then ther that how it pleased God (in that great deliuernace in the yeare 1588.) to make Watermen good seruicable instruments, with their losse of liues and limbs to defend their Prince and Country. More ouer many of them serued with Sir Francis Drak, Sir John Hawkins, Sir Martin Frobisher and others, besides in Cales action, (the Iland voyage, in Ireland, in the Lowcuntryes, and in the narrow seas they haue beene, (as in duty they are bound) at continuall command, so that every Sommer 1500. or 2000. of them were employed to the places aforesaid, hauing but nine shillings four pence the month a peece for their pay, and yet were they able then to set themselves out like men, with shifft of Aparell, linen and wollen, and forbear charging of their Prince for their pay sometimes sixe months, nine months, twelve months, sometimes more, for then there were so few Watermen and the one halse of them being at Sea, those that staid at home had as much woike as they would doe.

Afterwards the Players began to play on the Bankside and to

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leauie Playing in London & Middlesex (for the most part) then there went such great concourse of people by water, that the small number of watermen the remain'd at home were not able to cary them, by reason of the Court, the Tarmes, the players, and other imployments, so that we were inforced and encouraged, (hoping that this golden stirring world would haue lasted euer) to take and entertaine men and boyes, which boyes are growne men, and keepers of houses, many of them being ouer charged with families of Wife and Children, so that the number of Water-men, and those that liue and are maintained by them, and by the onely labour of the Oare and the Skull, betwixt the Bridge of Windsor, and Grauesend, cannot be fewer then forty thousand; the cause of the greater halfe of which multitude, hath beene the Players playing on the Bank-side, for I haue knowne three Companies, besides the Beare-bayting, at once there, to wit, the Globe, the Rose, and the Swan. And it is an infallible truth that had they neuer played there it had beene better for Water-men by the one halfe of their liuing, for the Company is encreased more then halfe by their meanes of playing there in former times.

And now it hath pleased God in this peacefull time, that there is no imployment at the sea, as it hath beene accustom'd, so that all those great numbers of men remaines at home, and the Players haue all (except the Kings men) left their vsuall residency on the Bank-side, and doe play in Midelsex far remote from the Thames, so that every day in the weeke they doe draw vnto them three or foure thousand people, that were vsed to spend their monies by water, (to the releefe of so many thousands of poore people, which by Players former playing on the Bankside,) are encreased so that oftentimes a poore man that hath fife or sixe children, doth giue good attendance to his labour all day, and at night (perhaps) hath not gotten a Groat to relieue himselfe his wife and familie.

This was the effect and scope of our petition though here

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I haue declared it more at large, to which his Maiestie graciously granted me a reference to his comissioners for suites, who then were the Right honorable Sir *Julius Cesar*, Sir *Thomas Parry* Knights, the Right Worshipfull Sir *Francis Bacon* then the Kings Atturney generall, Sir *Henry Montague* his Maiesties Seargent at Law, Sir *Walter Cope*, Maister *George Calvert*, one of the Clarks of his Maiesties priuy Counsell, and Barron *Southerton*, one of the Barrons of the Kings exchequer, these Honorable and Worshipful persons I did oft solicite, by petitions, by friends, and by mine owne industrious imporunity, so that in the end when our cause was heard, we found them generally affected to the suit we prosecuted.

His Maiesties Players did exhibit a petition against vs, in which they said that our suit was vndeasonable, and that wee might as iustly remoue the exchange, the walkes in *Pauls*, or *Moorefields* to the Bankside for our profites as to confine them; but our extremities and cause being iudiciously pondered by the Honorable and Worshipfull Commissioners, Sir *Francis Bacon* very worthily said that so farforth as the Publicke weale was to be regarded before pastimes, or a seruiceable decaying multitude before a handfull of perticular men, or profit before pleasure, so fare was our suite to be preferred before theirs. Wherevpon the players did apeale to the Lord Chamberlaine, which was then the Earle of Somerset who stood well affected to vs, hauing beeene moued before in the buisines by Maister *Samuel Goldsmith* an especiall friend of mine, and a gentleman that my selfe and all the rest of my poore company in generall, are generally beholding and deepeley ingaged vnto; for of his owne free will to his cost and charge, we must with thankfulness acknowledge hee hath beeene and is continually our worthie friend. Who seeing the wants of such numbers of vs, hee hath often neglected his owne vrgent and profitable afaires, spending his time and coyne in any honest occasion that might profit vs. This much I thought good to insert in the way of thankfulness, because of al vices ingratitude is mosthateful.

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17th and College Library
Ben J. Friend
October 11-1920

